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ABSTRACT

It is the misfortune of young adolescents that just at the point in their lives when they are seeking definition, two areas of confusion and ignorance converge: confusion about the purposes of schooling for young adolescents and ignorance about early adolescence as a critical developmental stage in the life span. Some myths which prohibit better services to young adolescents include the following: (1) adolescence is "normally pathological," (2) adolescents are a homogeneous group, (3) adolescents are children, (4) adolescent growth is continuous and uniformly synchronized, and (5) adolescence is a "transitional" time of life. Beliefs such as these diminish the ability of teachers to perceive and effectively respond to adolescents' needs which originate in socio-emotional developmental tasks such as forming commitments, outgrowing characteristic forms of egocentrism, and, importantly, exploring the capacity to think abstractly. Current teacher training practices do not sufficiently stress development: secondary school teachers are therefore not adequately prepared for teaching adolescents. Once in schools, teachers can expect little help from the misused school guidance system. Since no utopian solutions to the problems of educating young adolescents exist, two questions should be kept in mind to keep practice on the right track: How do we want adolescents to grow up in America? and, What do we want adolescents to be doing? (Author/RH)

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EARLY ADOLESCENCE -- SOCIAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES

Talk presented at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development 1981 Annual Conference

St. Louis, Missouri March 8, 1981

Joan Lipsitz

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Early adolescence is a time during which life-changing growth occurs. It is a time when young people begin to define themselves as social beings with a sense of commitment to their personal futures and their society. It is a time to begin considering how to function on one's own. It is a time for establishing a firm sense of racial identity and for sorting through feelings about sexual identity. It is a time when the capacity for hypothetical, abstract thought begins to develop. Physically, it is a time of the most rapid growth and change in the entire human experience. It is, in other words, a critical time of development that can determine the quality of one's future.

Schooling for young adolescents -- middle grade education -- is the weakest link in the chain of public education. It is the misfortune of young adolescents that just at the point in their lives when they are seeking definition, two areas of confusion and ignorance converge: confusion about the purposes of schooling for young adolescents and ignorance about early adolescence as a critical developmental stage in the life span. The convergence of these two areas of confusion and ignorance -- what a school for young adolescents should do and what a young adolescent should be - dangerously undermines the day-to-day functioning of our schools.

In the senior high years we will continue to reap the bitter harvest of our neglect of middle grade schooling if we d not focus our attention on these formative years.

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It is at the very least cost-ineffective to spend considerable amounts of money on the very young without following through to make good on our

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investment. Likewise, it is an inefficient use of our public monies to concentrate on remediation and re-education at the time of transition into the labor market while failing to support necessary programs in the middle grades that could reduce the need for later widespread remediation. We attend to inputs and outputs. Where is the middle?

Where do young adolescents go to school? These 12-to 15 or 10-to 15-year-olds are placed predominantly in junior high schools but increasingly in middle schools. The distinction between junior high and middle schools is often meaningless. For instance, in 1978 the state of New York had 236 public middle schools, defined as grades 5-7, 6-8, or 5-8, and 417 public junior high schools, defined as schools with grades no lower than sixth or higher than ninth, except for those with grades 6-8 (which are middle schools)! Information like this about where adolescents go to school is just about useless and is the rule, not the exception. In North Carolina in 1976, 12-to 15-year-olds were in schools with 26 different grade configurations (K-8, 6-8, 7-9, 7-8, 7-10, etc.). There is no consensus about where young adolescents should be inschool, much less about what the schools should be doing. It is an age group waiting for social attention.

I've been asked to speak this afternoon about some social/psychological issues of early adolescence and about myths which serve as barriers to better services for the age group. Despite increased attention to young adolescents we are still enmeshed in myths which I think are very destructive to these young people at such a vulnerable time in their development -- and also destructive to us as we define and redefine social institutions for this age group, especially school and after-school programs.

There is a line on my desk calendar from 1980 by Earl Wilson that says something like "Snow and adolescence are the only problems that will go away if you ignore them long enough." In this country, certain age groups are stereotyped and are a source for humor. When adolescence is not seen as humorous, it is seen as a pathological time in life, "normally pathological." This is one of the serious myths that we have about adolescence, that it is

pathological, that it is by its nature a time of storm and stress, that adolescents are crazy, off the wall, at the mercy of their hormones, governed by forces within them over which we and they can have no control.

Is this a pathological time in the life span, as the stereotype of this age group would have it? In fact, somewhere around 80% of adolescents manage to cope with this time of remarkable change and growth with the coping skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives. Coping skills are established quite early and our styles of coping appear to remain somewhat stable throughout our lives. What this means is that adolescence is as normal as any other time in life. In other words, 80% of adults fare well in coping with day-to-day life and change, just as 80% of adolescents do. We may not like the fact that 20% of us do not do that well, but we must accept the fact that either all of us are in a constantly pathological time in life, or that adolescence is a normal time of development. The statistics about distress are the same for adults as they are for adolescents.

Now among the 80% who cope well, there are three types of development that have been identified in particular by Daniel Offer. Approximately one-quarter of adolescents experience what is called continuous development, apparently easy, synchronized growth not marked by any undue storm or stress. Approximately 35% experience what is called surgent growth, growth marked by starts and stops, by times of stress and times of calm, by peaks and by plateaus. And then one-fifth experience what is called tumultuous development, the storm and stress that in our inappropriate expectations we expect all adolescents to experience.

We know that if storm and stress are to occur, they are more likely to occur during early adolescence than during middle adolescence, when we tend to expect them to. By tenth grade, parents report an easing of tension with their young adolescents. So do teachers. Unfortunately, since we expect the tensions to escalate, we ask ourselves, "If it's like this now when my child is 12, what will it be like at 15 or 16?" The answer is that it will probably be better, whatever the "it" is. But because we expect an unending, riotous escalation of tensions, we batten down the hatches and resolve to ride out the storm. Or

we may clamp down with inappropriate controls in expectation of worse times to come. Or we may throw our hands up in despair and abdicate all responsibility. We misread the signs of normal adolescent behavior and overreact.

The second harmful myth is the myth of homogeneity. I really have never understood why it is that despite all our personal experience to the contrary, we insist upon thinking that "they" are all alike, they out there, the teenagers, a homogeneous group. This leads to a dangerous mental set in which we assume the inevitability of a generation gap, because they are they and we are we. We have a zookeeper mentality, containing, controlling an alien species, keeping them as caged and as separate as possible.

The fact is that contrary to our expectations of homogeneity, there is no more wildly variable group that we can deal with than young adolescents. Any junior high school teacher can tell you this. Anyone who has had more than one adolescent can tell you this. In fact, all of our experiences tell us this. Because of the extreme variability in development, there can be a six-year span in biological development between a quickly developing girl and a slowly developing boy, and here I am talking only about biological development. When you think about all the ages that an adolescent juggles, biological, social, emotional, intellectual, academic, it makes a mockery of chronological age. In fact, we could call this the myth of chronological age as well as the myth of homogeneity. To be told that someone is thirteen is to be told just about nothing about that person except perhaps grade level in school -- which says something about grade level in school.

The third myth that we see malfunctioning daily in our society is that adolescents are children. There is a secular trend that indicates that the onset of puberty has occurred four months earlier every decade since the beginning of record-keeping in Scandinavia in the mid-nineteenth century. It is possible that this trend has now ended. In fact, it is possible that it ended a generation ago. We are not sure. There does seem to be some limit to how early human beings can develop the capacity to reproduce. Nevertheless,

if we assume that this trend ended in approximately 1960, when we take one social institution, the junior high school, which began in about 1910, there were 50 years between 1910 and 1960, which mean five decades, times four months, which equals approximately two years that young adolescents are now biologically in advance of the young adolescents for whom the junior high school was established. There may, therefore, be a serious lack of fit between schooling for young adolescents and the young people who are in these schools.

Since the gap between the ability to reproduce and engaging in sexual behavior that leads to reproduction seems to be narrowing, we consider these young people children very much at our risk and their risk. And there are scary statistics about this age group that should cure us once and for all of dismissing them as merely children, children who will "grow out of it." Girls 15 and under are the only age group for whom the birth rate is not declining. The safe school study sponsored by the National Institute of Education tells us that violence in schools peaks during the junior high years. In fact, the least safe place for any adolescent boy to be is in a junior high school. Seventh graders, out of all of the years in schooling, are the most likely to be assaulted.

There are other statistics that support the NIE data, seeming to indicate that the junior high years in particular are highly stressful years that we have not taken an adequate look at. Decisions to drop out of school are often made during the junior high school years, the years immediately preceding age 16. During the height of the runaway crisis, the average age of runaways in this country was 14-1/2. The juvenile crime rate has been soaring, and some investigators report that it appears to "blossom" at around age 14 -- some say at age 12 for repeating offenders. The adolescent suicide rate is rising alarmingly, and has become the second leading cause of death among adolescents. The average age of initiation to alcohol is somewhere around age 12, and approximately 20 to 30 percent of eighth graders in America drink excessively. The average age of children in foster care in this country is now 12. These

are extremely troubling statistics, and they indicate, to me at least, that we need to take a new look at the kinds of services that we provide for this junior-high age group. It is particularly instructive to look at rates of juvenile delinquency, and to note that they decrease, they do not increase, they decrease during the summer months. In other words, the rate of juvenile delinquency is highest during the school months.

We cannot hide our heads in the sand and comfort ourselves by ignoring these signs of distress among adolescents. When we call them children, we are trying to bask in some mythical idea of childlike innocence and playfulness. Now, of course, some adolescents are still quite innocent and very playful. And the scary statistics represent only a small percentage of an otherwise healthy and coping population. Variability in developmental patterns and cultural expectations will determine the rapidity of the onset of adolescence. We must break out of the mindset that makes us see all adolescents as children. Some are, some are not. One fourteen-year-old on a youth panel at a conference in Houston, in a drug program, flagrantly sexually active, complained that when her boyfriend called, her mother would say, "Just a minute, she is outside playing." She wasn't playing. Others <u>are</u> outside playing. And we must consider the climate in which she and her peers are growing up.

Last year I was asked to deliver a talk to the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists. I was returning from a trip to New York on a jumbo jet. I thought I was going to use the time between the LaGuardia and Raleigh/Durham Airports to start preparing for the talk, but I couldn't concentrate, so I plugged myself into the earphones and listened to Eastern Airlines' "Popular Sounds." Within ten minutes I had heard Barry Manilow telling me that "all I could taste was love the way you made it," a rather vivid image, and Natalie Cole asking someone to "touch me one more time the way you did Sweet Daddy last night." Inadvertently, I had begun preparing for the talk.

I think the word "inadvertently" is an important one. It is easy to forget that young people grow up in a teasing, sexual culture where they pick up a great deal of information, form attitudes, and have preconceived ideas inadvertently. There is a great deal of sex education in this country, even 30,000 feet in the air between New York and Raleigh. Barry Manilow and Natalie Cole are not punk rock singers setting out to shock mainstream American values. They ARE mainstream America. They help form the climate within which young adolescents resolve, for better or for worse, the tasks of early adolescent development.

A fourth myth that is harmful to adolescents is our expectation of continuous, uniform synchronized growth. Just as there is great variability among adolescents where their growth patterns are concerned, there is variability within each adolescent in terms of the various types of growth that are occurring at one time. Biological, social, emotional, and intellectual growth are not synchronized. When we assume that a boy of 12 who is tall for his age is therefore emotionally or intellectually mature, we place inappropriate pressures on him for adultlike behavior. Girls who develop rapidly physically experience considerable pressures not just from adults but from older boys. Similarly, slowly developing boys are assumed to be children emotionally and socially long after they are ready to assume greater responsibility for their lives. Growth is not continuous and uniform. We hurt young people when we act on the assumption that it is.

The fifth myth that I want to talk about is the myth that adolescence is "transitional." We are so used to thinking of adolescence as being a transitional time in life, that we rarely ask ourselves why it is any more transitional than any other stage in life. Why is it more transitional, for instance, than being a toddler is? All stages in life are marked by growth and change. Why do we label one, and only one, transitional? I resist calling adolescence transitional because I feel that it is a cop-out. It is a way of saying that because they will grow out of "it," we don't have to pay attention to them while they are in "it." It is a way of saying to young people that

what they are experiencing in the here-and-now is transitory and therefore not of the intense importance that they see it as being. The here-and-now is at no time in our lives more intensely experienced than when we are adolescents. What we are saying to too many young people is, "Be good, have fun, stay out of trouble, prepare for life, and we'll get back to you later when we like you better and understand you more." That is why I resist labeling this group as transitional. I am in this case less concerned with whether this is a myth or not, than I am with the types of behavior it leads to on our part when we call adolescence a transitional time in life. I think it leads to dangerous behavior on our part. I think it wipes kids out. They don't feel transitional. They feel very real right here right now, and it is in the here-and-now that we must address their needs.

Their needs result from developmental tasks that I would like to touch on for a few minutes.

There are many tasks to be resolved that John Hill groups under the headings of primary and secondary changes. I am here referring to John Hill's monograph, Understanding Early Adolescence: A Framework. I want to elaborate on a few. One of these tasks is forming the ability to say, for the first time, "I have a future," "I have a destiny," "I am part of a generation," I want to stress their ability to make a commitment to that future.

Forming commitments is a crucial socio-emotional task for adolescents. It includes the capacity to interact with others and to contribute to social cohesion. It includes the capacity to consider vocational concerns. We do not as a society give young people opportunities to try out different roles and commitments exactly at the time in their lives when they are ready to, during the early years of adolescence. One of the reasons that we don't is related to two of the myths that I discussed, first that they are children and second that this is a pathological time in the life span. Young adolescents are considered irresponsible, even dangerous. We do not invite them to accept socially responsible roles. Except, of course, in the evening when these young people are the babysitters of our nation, when we entrust to them

our most precious possessions, our young children. Then they are responsible for life and limb, for entire households. We are wildly inconsistent with this age group at a time when consistency of expectation is important, since they are defining themselves as individuals and members of society.

Another socio-emotional developmental task during adolescence is outgrowing certain characteristic forms of egocentrism that flourish during adolescence. Every stage in life has aspects of egocentrism peculiar to that particular stage. There are two, according to David Elkind, that flourish during early adolescence that we see functioning daily in the lives of these young people. The first has been called the "imaginary audience." Everyone out there is looking at me. I am always on stage. I am never alone. Everything counts, everything that I do, everything that I wear, everything that I say. This exquisite self-consciousness that can at times be very painful is based on what sometimes appears to be a cosmic egocentrism or self-importance. As development continues and the young person successfully becomes an individual with an inner identity, capable of intimacy and personal relationships, he or she works his or her way out of this form of egocentrism. Another type of egocentrism is called the "personal fable." It appears to contradict the imaginary audience. In the personal fable, I am alone, no one understands me, I am unique, no one experiences what I am experiencing. My story is my own, unique to me. This is the first time in a person's life that this type of existential loneliness is felt. Sometimes the personal fable includes a sense of immortality. Because I am unique, I am unlike everyone else; I will not die; I will not crash in this car; I will not become pregnant. It can't happen to me. I am immune. Thus the risk-taking behavior characteristic of and necessary to adolescence can become very dangerous. Behaviors that are the result of these forms of egocentrism can be humorous, troubling, irritating, deeply disturbing. They are normal.

A quick word about cognitive development. During early adolescence many of us make a shift in our capacity to think, from needing to rely on the

concrete example to being able to form abstractions. This is an exhilarating phenomenon because it is so uniquely human. We begin to be able to think about thinking, to generalize, to consider metaphors, to appreciate theorems, everything that has to do with the ability to deal with abstract thought. We begin to be able to take multiple perspectives. Without this capacity we are truly incapable of forming independent moral judgments. It is this onset of what is called formal operations, this ability to think abstractly, that makes it possible for young adolescents to question adults' values. This questioning is a normal and critical aspect of human development. In fact, this shift to formal operations probably underlies many of the socio-emotional tasks that I have already described. For instance, we are probably not able truly to become individuals with a coherent, cohesive sense of identity without this shift in intellectual development. We are also not able to break through that sense of immunity that blocks us from adopting preventive behaviors.

I want to pursue this point for a minute, since it is of such concern these days. Most discussions of teenage pregnancy prevention assume the adolescent's capacity to anticipate consequences, to consider what is a probable outcome of personal behavior, or to project oneself in one's "mind's eye" into the future. In other words, prevention is based on an ability to approach problem-solving by engaging in formal operational thought. But young adolescents, and even many middle adolescents, are just beginning to have this capacity, and only some of them are even beginning. How can a young adolescent understand the idea of prevention? I mentioned the "personal fable" before, that form of egocentrism that leads an adolescent to say, "It can't happen to me" (a form of egocentrism known intimately by adults who smoke, may I add, and by many adults who fail to protect themselves against fire, theft, VD, unplanned pregnancy, and other human calamities). A young adolescent, locked in that personal fable, unable to think about contingencies and probability, and sorting through what it means to be feminine, let us say, in a culture that teaches that to be feminine is NOT to be prepared (that's the Boy Scout motto, remember), is unlikely to respond to a sex educator's dream course on human sexuality that is based on the best of what we know about

prevention. Because the best of what we know is not appropriate to early adolescent development. A developmental perspective of cognition should pervade curriculum development and direct service delivery -- but it usually doesn't.

I am going to yield to the personal for a moment, and tell you that my first teaching assignment was in a senior high school in Meriden, Connecticut, and my last in a junior high in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. It was the contrast between those two teaching experiences which stunned me so much that, like the Ancient Mariner, I started talking to anyone who would listen to my tale. Sometimes I think that I owe whatever has happened to me professionally in the past few years to my having been traumatized in that junior high school. I wish I had known then what I have just briefly summarized for you now about adolescent development. I am actually very angry that I, like almost every secondary school teacher in this country, had no preparation for teaching young adolescents. I am also proud that I survived, that my students survived, and that we were able to transform my ignorance into a learning environment for teacher and students alike. But I regret that it took so much energy, both physical and emotional, to create, alone in an unmovable institution, a learning and living environment in my junior high classroom. There are many things I wish I had known.

For instance, I wish I had known about the adolescent growth spurt. You may think it is strange of me to emphasize a developmental characteristic which seems so irrelevant to schooling. Well, you know that when you walk into a seventh or eighth grade classroom and look at the students, they are the most squiggly, squirmy group of kids you've ever seen. They can't sit still. Why is it that we know that toddlers can't sit still, but we don't know young adolescents can't? Would you recommend tenure for a teacher who insisted that four-year-olds sit up straight and stay seated for 45 minutes at a time? Can you imagine how many of these toddlers would be identified as behavior problems? We do this to young adolescents. Just at the most rapid time of growth and change in human development, we make them sit. Children in elementary schools

move around. Young people in senior high schools leave school for work, for lunch, or to go to learning centers. Kids in junior highs sit. It is the most sedentary time in the continuum of schooling, probably because we are afraid of their physical energies and are trying to control them. When I was teaching, I did not know that their perpetual motion was normal, not perverse.

Let me say as an aside, that it was my experience that discipline problems declined precipitously when I allowed my students to get up and move around and stopped attempting the impossible, the containment of their physical energies.

I wish I had known more about how creative the energies of adolescents could be. I am talking now about intellectual and emotional energies as well as the physical. When I was finally prepared for the explosions of creativity that I at first reacted to so defensively, we had excellent times.

For instance, one language arts class decided to stage the parallel balcony scenes from Romeo and Juliet and West Side Story. There were at least five or six activities going on at once in my room, so that when someone asked me, over my left shoulder, whether I play the piano, I shot back a "yes" without even wondering why. The next thing I knew, a piano was being rolled into my classroom! Now, one gets used to many things in schools, but a piano being rolled into a classroom is still a remarkable event. One's first reaction is, "Okay, it's all over. I'm going to be fired." The second is a screaming, "Where did that come from?" The answer, of course, is cool: "From the music room." And then, one asks the absurd question, "Did you get permission?"

In fact, these students had gotten permission. They were having trouble learning the harmony to that beautiful duet, "Tonight," from West Side Story, so what was more sensible than to ask me if I play the piano, get a piano, and get me to play the song for them? Now, you may say that it was more sensible to take me to the piano, but kids know teachers are captives in their classrooms

and besides, they are so full of dynamic energy that it's no harder to take the piano to the teacher than to take the teacher to the piano.

I assume that piano is now back in the music room. At the time, stunned, I sat down, played the duet for them, taught the harmony to "Tonight," they said thank you, and the piano disappeared.

I would venture to guess that only one or two of those students remember this incident today. Their energies are not remarkable to them, only to us. I wish I had known from the start how beautiful and creative the projects of those energies can be if adolescents are given broad leeway within clearly defined, safe limits.

I wish I had known about the developmental tasks of adolescence, tasks with such labels as "separation," "individuation," and "commitment." I knew that separating oneself from one's parents was a hot issue. I learned that the hard way when I was being hassled to death by a student over some authority issue until, in a loss of cool, I blurted, "Look, I'm not your mother!" When the class went wild with laughter, humiliating my victim even further, I knew I had hit on a deep truth about authority issues in schools. I wish I hadn't had to learn through the hard experiences of my students and myself.

I wish I had known that friends are the lifeline of adolescents. After all, who else will accept so generously and be engaged in all the different selves and roles and moods that are being assumed weekly, sometimes hourly, except someone else who needs the same acceptance in return?

And these friendships can be remarkably generous. We do everything we can in schools to separate friends, instead of seeing the peer group as potentially positive and working with it. I learned about this through chance. I had assigned some writing to my students and had asked them to critique each other's work. Since I liked to do what I assigned, I sat among my students and wrote as they wrote. I had always wondered what that soft hum was in the classroom, that low noise level that teachers come to accept as silence. Sitting quietly

among students who slowly forgot I was there, I was able to hear some of the most generous give-and-take I have ever heard. Some of it was about the lesson at hand: "How does this sound?" "How do you spell 'embarrassed'?" "Do you think she'll like this?" Some of it was about more pressing emotions and concerns, not what was important to me in my role as teacher but what was crucial to them as human beings before they could assume their role as students.

Those times when by accident, as with the piano incident or the writing lessons, I allowed natural peer groupings to flourish, led to some of the most productive, creative experiences in my classroom. I wish I had been able to have the conviction that what I was doing was right and natural instead of fearing that I was capitulating to the so-called "tyranny of the peer group."

I wish I had been able to distinguish between distressed and distressing behavior. Distressing behavior drives me up the wall, but it is normal. It is troubling, but not troubled. Distressed behavior is troubled behavior. It calls for concerned intervention, sometimes professional. All of us who have been parents of adolescents have worried about how to distinguish between distressed and distressing behavior. Good teachers and social workers and doctors and judges worry also.

I remember my first week of parent-teacher conferences. I was eager to meet the parents of one student in particular who was driving me to distraction. I was truly worried about him and my unsuccessful interactions with him. I wanted his parents to shed some light on his behavior for me. I was sure that they were containing massive amounts of hostility towards me because of my inability to understand their son. In all my supposed maturity, I was ready to accept that hostility in return for enlightenment. At the appointed hour, that boy's mother, at least ten years older than I, came rushing into my room, saying anxiously, "Tell me what to do with my son!" There we were, the blind leading the blind.

A good guidance system helps teachers and parents to distinguish between the troubling and the troubled. It suggests some coping mechanisms and offers some guidelines. It serves as a referral mechanism to public and private social service agencies and professionals. But it is not a deep, dark secret that school guidance personnel have been so misused in this country that in many schools teachers must go it alone.

I am angry for myself, for parents, and especially for the estimated 20% of adolescents who do not go serenely through this time of remarkable change and variability.

I wish I had known about the 20%. If I tell you that my student committed suicide, you will be deeply impressed and understand my concern.

But the truth is more ordinary. The truth is that I don't know what happened to that student. He disappeared into that whole wash of former students who came and went, whose lives I touched more or less seriously, and whom I remember more as anecdotes than as people. In other words, I did not help that student, I ignored him as much as possible, and then forgot him as much as possible. I wish I had a different story to tell you.

Finally, I wish I had known more about myself. It can be very trying to be a teacher of adolescents, especially young adolescents. They are so many different ages at once. They are so wildly variable. They have so many developmental tasks to resolve. Clearly, no one resolves all those tasks during adolescence. We are all of us walking around with unresolved conflicts stemming from our own adolescent years, conflicts having to do with separation, individuation, independence, commitment, and sexuality. These adolescents are acting out in stereophonic sound on a panoramic screen what we would rather not acknowledge in ourselves. Or, to use another metaphor, they are like mirrors of our own unresolved conflicts, and mirrors that talk back to us.

We reject in them what we cannot accept in ourselves. We fear their energies because we are unsure of our own inner controls. And of course we envy them. They are young, attractive, and bursting with vitality. We imagine them to be free.

Adolescence can be a fragile time in the life span. We all feel vulnerable with these young people. We forget that during this time of rapid growth and change, they are so very vulnerable to us. They are open to negative influences, and we do worry about that. But they are also open to positive influences. They are hungry for experiences, adventure, safety, ideas, facts, and relationships. They are hungry for adult attention. They are hungry for models. I was a model. I wish I had known how important I was.

John Dewey said a wonderful and infrequently quoted thing about schools. At an address at Teachers College in 1933, Dewey said, "The most Utopian thing about Utopia is that there are no schools at all." Education in Utopia, Dewey went on to say, is carried out without benefit of schools, since children learn what they have to know in informal association with the adults who direct their activity. I've taken this quotation from Lawrence Cremin's book, Public Education, in which Cremin says that Dewey's view demands a society whose values are so pervasive and whose institutions are so cohesive as to form the young through the very process of living. We do not have these cohesive institutions, and we do not have values that are so pervasive in our institutions that we can live up to the Utopian ideal. Nor are we the adults that Dewey was speaking of, adults whose values are so coherent and pervasive that, through informal association with children and adolescents, we pass on to them, without benefit of school, our values and the noble ideals of our society. There would be no conference here today were we living in such a Utopia.

This lack of coherence and this lack of pervasive values make our jobs very difficult. This is a pluralistic society with subcultural as well as

majority values, an age-segregated society where children and adolescents have little contact with diverse adult models, a time of economic stress when the traditional purposes for schooling, preparing for college or for entry into an open labor market, are not necessarily motivating the young. The demands upon our resourcefulness are very heavy.

I used to be very struck by the deep, masculine, authoritative voice which came over the TV or radio, asking me, "Do you know where your child is tonight?" The child, of course, was an adolescent, presumably out on the town, high on drugs, contracting V.D., or being assaultively criminal.

I am now struck by the possible alternative ways of asking that question: "Do you know who your child is tonight?" or, "Do you know who you want your child to be?" or, taking a broader perspective, "Do we know where America's children are?", "Do we know who they are?", "Do we know who we want them to be?"

At conferences like this everyone gets inundated with rhetoric and charges and I, of course, have my charge to make to you. I hope you are asking and continue to ask yourselves two questions in relation to young adolescents that will keep all of us on the right track: how do we want adolescents to grow up in America? what do we want them to be doing? These are "killer questions," but they are the only ones that really count.

Thank you.